



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

SKETCH  
OF THE  
HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION  
ON  
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK.  
BY REV. EUGENE LEIBERT.

---

In the spring of the year 1743, there was cited before the Mayor and Council of New York, a godly man, accused of no other crime than that of preaching the Gospel. Without a trial, without being informed wherein his offence consisted, he was ordered to leave the city, and when he meekly asked why the sentence was passed upon him, he was roughly answered, "because you are a vagabond." This persecuted servant of God was the learned and pious Moravian Bishop, Peter Boehler. The Mayor who banished him was the tool of men who should have given the Bishop the right hand of fellowship, as a co-laborer in the Lord's vineyard, and who might have profited by the instructions relating to pastoral duties that he was so well qualified by his rich experience and wonderful attainments to give, but who so far departed from the functions of their sacred calling, as to incite the populace against this faithful messenger of the Gospel.

Bishop Boehler obeyed the arbitrary decree and left the city, taking up his abode temporarily on Long Island. But neither he nor his friends would allow themselves to be thus driven from the field; they made no attempts to bring their false accusers or the unjust officers to account, as they might have done, but after ascertaining what was required by the civil law to empower a body of Christians to enjoy the ministrations of such a preacher as they might prefer, and complying therewith, the Bishop returned to the

city, and devoted himself to the interests of a little band of God's children, that had been awakened mainly through his instrumentality and those of others belonging to the same ecclesiastical organization with himself.

But not without further interruption; for the same bitter enemies endeavored to banish him from the city, and succeeded in having an act passed by the General Assembly of the Province, forbidding all Moravian ministers to preach. A few members of the Assembly opposed the act, one sarcastically proposing that it should be denominated the "Persecuting Act," and another advising its supporters to "hang the Moravians, as their forefathers had done to the Quakers."

But, strange as it may appear, the act was passed, and became a law for one year. The Moravians could hold no services; they were regarded with suspicion, hatred and envy. Denunciations were fulminated against them in pamphlets and newspapers; preachers vituperated and defamed them in their pulpits, and they could not venture abroad in safety. When they appeared in the streets they were recognized, and the populace cast stones at them. Two of the Brethren, missionaries, travelling through the Province on their errand of mercy to the Indians, were cast into prison, and nothing was left undone to harass and distract them.

All this took place a few years after the Moravians first commenced their labors in this vicinity. They had scarcely become acquainted with some pious individuals in the city of New York and its neighborhood, and held devotional meetings for them, before the whole community was in a ferment, and they were subjected to bitter persecution; so that the history of the planting of the Moravian church in these parts is, to a great extent, a narrative of continual annoyances and molestations from without, and of acts and doings on the part of nominal Christians that are a sad indication of the religious condition of the Province at that time. It is a narrative too of patient and self-denying labor for the good of mankind, of calm trust in God, of obedience to his commandments, of faithful devotion to His service; and it affords abundant evidence that the Master comforts and supports His servants, and ultimately crowns their labor with success.

When the first Moravian colonists arrived in this country, in the year 1735, and settled in the Province of Georgia, they pur-

chased their provisions, implements, and various needful articles in New York ; and having become acquainted with an upright man residing there, who manifested great interest in them, they made him their agent. This man was associated with a few others who loved the Lord, and who were accustomed to meet together privately for mutual edification ; and when Bishop David Nitschman and Brother Spangenberg, afterwards Bishop (or "Brother Joseph") who had accompanied the colonists to Georgia, passed through the city in the year 1736 on their way to Pennsylvania, they became personally acquainted with the members of this little circle, several of whom grew very much attached to them, and from that time desired that a Moravian church might be established in the city. Five years later, in 1741, Bishop Boehler organized a Christian Society, in connection with the Moravian church, who seem to have been full communicants of other denominations, but were dissatisfied with the worldliness that prevailed in their own churches, and were attracted by the simplicity and purity of faith exhibited by the early Moravians.

Count Zinzendorf, who arrived at New York the same year, on his way to Pennsylvania, spent a few days there, and his intercourse with the newly formed society had the effect of uniting its members still more closely together in the bonds of Christian love. They had as yet no minister of their own, but a pious man named Jacques Cortelyou, residing on Long Island, was appointed their Elder, and other officers were chosen, by whom weekly Conferences were held in which the interests of the little flock were considered. They held devotional meetings, and were visited at intervals by bishops and ministers from Bethlehem.

In the year 1742,\* David Bruce was sent to look after the members of this Society, residing in the city of New York, on Long Island and Staten Island, and to preach to them, and we perceive that as early as the period just named there lived here friends of the Moravian Church who were ministered to by our Brethren.

Captain Nicholas Garrison, who, during frequent voyages at sea, had formed an intimacy with Spangenberg,† and had thus been

---

\* We gather this information from an old manuscript history of the Brethren's church in New York City.

attracted to the Brethren, united with the church, and rendered it most valuable services in the capacity of commander of the Moravian ship "Irene," which was employed in carrying colonists and stores for them from the Old to the New World.

This Captain Garrison, who was a native of Staten Island, had his family residing there, and abandoned the sea from time to time to live temporarily with them. He is supposed to have done much to promote the cause of the Brethren on the Island.

It appears that the following ministers preached and visited here at stated times from 1742 to 1763, when the first church was built :

1742. David Bruce.

1747. Richard Utley.

1749. John Wade.

1750. Owen Rice.

1754. Abraham Reinke, Jasper Payne, Owen Rice and Abraham Rasmeyer.

1755. Richard Utley.

1756. Jacob Rogers.

1757. Thomas Yarrel.

1761. George Sölle.

1762. Thomas Yarrel.

Of the labors of these Brethren we have but very meagre accounts. Their hearers on Staten Island seem to have been subjected to the same persecutions as their Brethren in New York, being denounced by ministers of other denominations from their pulpits. As late as the year 1789, one of them, in the course of a farewell sermon, cautioned his hearers against entering a Moravian church.

In the year 1756 there were three communicant members of the Moravian church residing here, viz. : Brother Vanderbilt and his wife and Sister Ingard. In October, 1758, Bishop Spangenberg made an official visit to the island, and in the same month and year, Rev. Thomas Yarrel, pastor of the New York congregation, came hither to conduct the interment services of Mr. John Van Deventer, who was the builder of the ship "Irene," and a man of some note, as appears from the fact that his funeral was attended by a large

---

† Their acquaintance took place on the Island of St. Eustatius. See memoirs of N. Garrison, *Brüderblatt*, July, 1857.

concourse of people, among whom were the local and provincial civil officers residing in the vicinity.

It is not known with any degree of certainty where divine service was held by our Brethren before the church was built, but it is said to have been in a school house standing near, or on the very site of the old church.

The ministrations of the Brethren above mentioned seem to have been very acceptable to the people. They desired that a Moravian church might be established here, and in the year 1762 a letter was sent to the proper authorities at Bethlehem, requesting "that the little flock here might be remembered, and that a Brother might be sent hither to preach the Gospel, and teach the little lambs which had been baptized by the Brethren." This letter, which is still in existence, is signed by Richard Connor, Stephen Martins, Jun., Tunis Egbert, Jacob Van Derbilt, John Van Derbilt, Aaron Cortelyou, Matthias Engard, John Baty, Cornelius Cortelyou, Cornelius Van Derbilt, Cornelius Vandeventer, Stephen Martins, Mary Stillwell, Cornelius Martins and Peter Perine.

It appears that it was in contemplation to erect a church and parsonage, but no detailed history of the building of the church can be found. It is only recorded that on the 7th of July, 1763, the corner stone was laid, on which occasion Brother Yarrel, pastor of the church in New York, preached on the text, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation."

Rev. Hector Gambold, the first resident Moravian minister on Staten Island, and his wife, arrived on the 17th of August following, and took up their abode in a house that was prepared for their temporary accommodation, until the parsonage should be finished. On the 7th of December of the same year, the church was consecrated by Brother Yarrel of New York, who preached on the text, "We preach Christ crucified." The parsonage appears not to have been completed until the 21st of December following.

Stewards were appointed to manage the affairs of the congregation on the 14th of September, 1766, when a set of regulations for the congregation were adopted.

But the congregation here appears to have been only a branch of that at New York until four years later, the minister and communicants being in the habit of going to the city at every communion

season. This custom continued until some time between the year 1769 and 1779; but as the journals of these years are lost, it is impossible to determine when the Lord's Supper was first celebrated here.

Scarcely any records are left to hand down to us the annals of the church during the Revolutionary War, but we are led to infer that our people suffered as much as their neighbors during that period. Among the few incidents known to us, one is related of some soldiers who were stationed on the island and forcibly entered the parsonage one night for the purpose of plundering it. Considerable damage was done by them, although none of the inmates were harmed.

On another occasion, some soldiers endeavored to break into the house of Christian Jacobsen, in the evening about bedtime. The family was alarmed by the noise they made, and Jacobsen, going to the door to ascertain the cause, was shot by one of them and soon after expired. This Christian Jacobsen is well known in Moravian history as the Captain of the ship "Irene," after Captain Garrison retired from active life. Whilst he commanded her, she was captured by a French privateer in the year 1757, and sent to Cape Breton, but on the 12th of January, 1758 she was cast away. The crew took to their boats, were thrown upon a desert coast, and obliged to work their way with great trial and peril through snow and ice, until they came to Louisburg. Captain Jacobsen and some other persons bought a ship in London, which he navigated until he had a new one built at New York, which he called the "Hope," in which Moravian colonists afterwards sailed between the Old and New World.

In 1784, Gambold was succeeded by Rev. James Birkley. In 1787 Rev. Frederick Moehring arrived here and assumed the pastorate of the church. His diary furnishes an interesting and often touching history of the congregation at the close of the last century. At the commencement of his ministry it consisted of 27 communicants, 52 stated hearers and 41 children. This little flock who, for the most part resided near the church, seem to have been closely united in the bonds of Christian love. Brother Moehring was much beloved by his people and respected by other citizens of the island. He lived in terms of close intimacy with Rev. Dr. Moore, then Rector of St. Andrew's Church, at Richmond, and

afterwards Bishop of Virginia. When tidings of Moehring's death came in 1804, Dr. Moore preached a discourse in his memory in his church at Richmond, Va.

It was during Brother Moehring's pastorate that the first Committee, or Board of Elders, was organized by Bishop Ettwein, 18th May, 1788. Such a Board has been in existence ever since, and a faithful record of all its transactions has been kept. By this record it appears that the minister received no fixed salary. His people brought him grain, meat and various articles of food, fuel, &c. Other articles of clothing, &c., were partly made up by weekly collections after the sermon. The deficiency was divided into a certain number of shares, of which each member took his quota, according to willingness or ability. This method which had many disadvantages, was established about the year 1798, when the minister's salary was fixed at the sum of £20, in cash, besides which he received annually such articles as the people themselves produced, viz: grain, meat, fuel, candles, flax, linen, &c. But the contributions were at times so scant, that the minister was often in want of the common necessities of life.

Brother Moehring was succeeded in 1803, by Brother Nathaniel Brown, who labored here until his death in 1813.

As it is not our aim to prolong the history of our earliest settlements and congregations far into the present century, we herewith close the sketch of the Congregation on Staten Island.



## APPENDIX TO SKETCH OF STATEN ISLAND CONGREGATION.

The following is a copy of a MS., in the handwriting of Rev. Hector Gambold, probably written in 1763 :

### " LIST OF OUR FRIENDS ON STATEN ISLAND."

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Aaron and Elizabeth Cortelyou,</b><br><b>*Cornelius and Sara Cortelyou,</b><br><b>*Jacob and Mary Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>*John and Anne Beatty,</b><br><b>Tunis and Anne Egbert,</b><br><b>Richard and Catharine Connor,</b><br><b>Stephen and Anne Martins,</b><br><b>Stephen and Elizabeth Martins,</b><br><b>James and Catharine Columb,</b><br><b>*Abraham Van Deventer,</b><br><b>*Elizabeth Inyard,</b><br><b>Mary Dally.</b> |   | <i>Widows.</i><br><b>Nieltie Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>Mary Stillwell,</b><br><b>Mary Barrago.</b>  |
| <i>Single Men.</i><br><b>Cornelius Van Deventer,</b><br><b>Nicholas Stillwell,</b><br><b>Benjamin Martins,</b><br><b>Edward Beatty.</b>   |   | <i>Single Women.</i><br><b>Catharine Van Deventer,</b><br><b>Anne Van Deventer,</b><br><b>Susanna Stillwell,</b><br><b>Catharine Stillwell,</b><br><b>Frances Stillwell,</b><br><b>Anne Stillwell,</b><br><b>Eleanor Martino,</b><br><b>Susanna Martino,</b><br><b>Isabel Beatty,</b><br><b>Dorothy Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>Eleanor Vanderbilt.</b>   |
| <i>Boys.</i><br><b>Peter Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Jacob Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>John Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>Jacob Barrago,</b><br><b>Henry Barrago,</b><br><b>John Egbert,</b><br><b>James Egbert.</b>   | <b>Dorothy Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>Catharine Dally,</b><br><b>Catharine Egbert,</b><br><b>Anne Connor,</b><br><b>Catharine Connor,</b><br><b>Hannah Martino,</b><br><b>Abigail Martino.</b>                     | <b>John Martino,</b><br><b>Stephen Martino.</b><br><br><b>Mary Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Martha Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Elizabeth Beatty,</b><br><b>Anne Beatty,</b><br><b>Mary Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Elizabeth Egbert,</b><br><b>Sarah Connor,</b><br><b>Elizabeth Connor,</b><br><b>Elizabeth Martino,</b><br><b>Mary Martino,</b><br><b>Eliz. Van Deventer,</b><br><b>Susannah Dally,</b><br><b>Anne Dally.</b> |
| <i>Girls.</i><br><b>Sarah Stillwell,</b><br><b>Sarah Martino,</b><br><b>Elizabeth Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Eleanor Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Mary Vanderbeak,</b>  | <i>Small Children.</i><br><b>Jacob Cortelyou,</b><br><b>Oliver Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>Joseph Vanderbilt,</b><br><b>John Beatty,</b><br><b>Edward Egbert,</b><br><b>Tunis Egbert,</b><br><b>Richard Connor,</b> |   |

\* These names are marked with an asterisk in the original list. They are probably the names of full communicants. E. L.